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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 RIYADH 000555

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DEPT FOR P, NEA(AA/S FELTMAN), INR/NESA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/11/2019

TAGS: [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [SA](#) [IR](#) [IZ](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: DEPUTY FM SEES IRAN UNDER EVERY ROCK

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires David Rundell for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

Key points

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11. (S) The Saudis accuse Iran of taking advantage of political instability throughout the Middle East and South Asia to increase its influence.

--(S/NF) Saudi Deputy FM Prince Turki bin Mohamad Al-Kabeer opined that Iran will achieve its goal of developing a nuclear weapon then the U.S. or other Western powers will have to provide a deterrent.

--(S) Prince Turki observed that the security situation in Iraq has improved as a result of improvements in the political situation, particularly the greater role given to Sunni politicians.

--(S) Turki recommended that the USG should work with Syria on Lebanon, Middle East peace, and engaging Hizballah.

Comment

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12. (C) The Saudis continue to see Iran as the Kingdom's principal security threat. Prince Turki has discussed the possibility of an Iranian nuclear weapon before, but his comments have become much more pointed, as has his assertion that Saudi Arabia would be compelled to seek a deterrent. Turki's positive assessment of the security situation in Iraq may signal that the Saudis are moving closer to sending an envoy, though he did not say this explicitly. End Comment.

Iran lurking around every corner

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(S) On April 7, Charge met with Deputy Foreign Minister for Multilateral Relations Dr. Prince Turki bin Mohamed al Kabeer to present demarches on Pakistan, Afghanistan, North Korea, and the UNHRC. Over the course of the meeting, the Prince's comments returned again and again to Iran's negative role in the region and what the USG should be doing to address this threat. During a discussion of the situation in Pakistan and Afghanistan, Turki said Iran was taking advantage of political instability to make their own inroads. He later returned to this theme during discussions on Iraq, Lebanon, and Syria; in particular framing his points on Syria as a way to move both Hizballah and Syria away from Iran.

(S/NF) But Prince Turki's most pointed comments came after

we delivered a demarche on the recent North Korean missile launch. He briefly speculated that North Korea's actions were an effort to gain more influence in their region, then quickly compared these efforts to Iran's work on missiles and nuclear technology. Turki said Iran would have a nuclear weapon within 5 - 6 years and that U.S. sanctions could delay this, but that nothing would stop it. Comparing a future Middle East in which Iran possessed nuclear weapons to Western Europe during the Cold War, Turki said Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states would have to turn to the U.S. and the West to provide a deterrent shield.

#### Security better in Iraq

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(S) During a brief discussion of Iraq, Prince Turki said the security situation has improved because of progress on the political front, singling out the greater role being given to Sunni politicians as an important step. He also said the Iraqis are capable of "running things" without outside interference and the USG should work to minimize Iran's role in Iraq.

#### Engage Syria, Hizballah

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(S/NF) As part of a larger discussion of Lebanon, Turki said we should work to convince Hizballah to become "just a political party" and abandon its military aspirations, and that this would best be done through Syria. According to the Prince, it is important the USG not isolate Syria and the

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more we engage Syria, the further we can move them from Iran. He said Syria can play an important role in Lebanon and in achieving Middle East peace.  
RUNDELL